

A LETTER TO PRESIDENT TRUMAN BY DR. KAZYS GRINIUS, FORMER PRESIDENT OF LITHUANIA

The Hon. Harry S. Truman
President of the United States.
Sir:

The present undeserved misfortunes and sufferings of the Lithuanian people, now passing through a most ruthless process of dispersion and extermination, have given me, a former President of the Democratic Republic of Lithuania, the courage to take the bold and unusual step of directing an appeal to Your Excellency for Your Excellency's personal intercession on Lithuania's behalf.

Through no conceivable fault of its own, Lithuania has undergone, in the course of seven years, three consecutive occupations, one more terrible than the other, by alien totalitarian powers. The third and present occupation, which began in July 1944, greatly transcends, in severity and horror, the two preceding ones.

If the present situation behind the "Iron Curtain" is permitted to continue; if the civilized world does not raise its voice in protest and condemnation of these inhuman crimes against international law and humanity, which now have been perpetrated for three years in occupied Lithuania; if the free nations and states do not take urgent measures to prevail upon the Soviets to withdraw from Lithuania, the Lithuanian nation, three million strong, will be stricken, in the very near future, off the roll of nations, together with its sister nations Latvia and Estonia, and the world community will lose forever a numerically small but unique member—unique by virtue of its origin, its language, its folklore, its popular art, and its customs. Through no act of its own, in its glorious past or the more immediate present, the Lithuanian people, composed for the most part of peaceful, law-abiding agriculturists, has not merited such an indescribably horrid fate, as has been lately imposed on it by brute force.

Despite the double Soviet "iron curtain," which separates the three Baltic States from the rest of the world, I have succeeded in obtaining exact and objective information regarding the present appalling state of affairs and the criminal character of Soviet policies in occupied Lithuania. The following is a short summary of the more pertinent facts:

1) In violation of international law, the Soviet authorities have drafted and are still drafting the country's youth for military service, despite Lithuania's neutral status and the forcible nature of its incorporation in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, about 100,000 young people of both sexes, between fourteen and twenty years of age, were deported to the remote recesses of Russia for labor in the course of the one single year of 1945. The deportations were continued in 1946.

2) The prisons are filled to overflowing. The conditions prevailing and the methods of examination employed in them are more reminiscent of Medieval than of modern times. Ninety per cent of all their inmates is composed of so-called political prisoners. After undergoing physical and mental torture for months on end, they are usually sentenced, without the benefit of a public trial, to terms of from eight to fifteen years of forced labor in the infamous Soviet concentration camps in the Arctic.

The prisoners and the other Lithuanians seized for forcible deportations, are transported in conditions defying description to concentration camps in the region of Vorkuta, not far from the Arctic Ocean. There they are forced, despite the murderous character of the climate

and the permanent state of starvation in which they are kept, to perform the very heaviest type of work in the newly opened and primitively equipped mines. The Soviet concentration camps do not yield the palm in any respect to the notorious Nazi camps of Buchenwald, Dachau and Auschwitz. To the concentration camps in the region of Vorkuta the Soviets have deported many prominent Lithuanian intellectuals, some of the most active members of the Lithuanian anti-Nazi underground movement and those political leaders who had not sought safety in flight.

During the first Soviet occupation (1940-1941), about 40,000 Lithuanians were deported to Soviet concentration camps or to Siberia. Since July of 1944, that number has risen to several hundred thousand.

3) Lithuania, which had once aroused the envious admiration of its neighbors by the flourishing state of its national economy and its rising standard of life, is now reduced by the unceasing depredations of successive invaders, back-breaking levies, and the sovietization of its economy, to the verge of starvation. The farming population is weighed down by an oppressive burden of compulsory agricultural deliveries, for which practically no payment is made. Failure to make these deliveries is punished with instant arrest and subsequent deportation to certain death in a Soviet concentration camp.

4) In Western Germany and other countries in Western and Northern Europe, there are 80,000 Lithuanians who are unable to return to their occupied homeland, for death by famine or cold, these grisly concomitants of the Soviet prison and concentration camp, await them with the grim relentlessness of doom.

5) The forcibly deported Lithuanians are replaced in Lithuania by colonists from Russia. At first, the latter were settled in towns and cities, but now they have made their appearance even in the rural areas. By the systematic deportation and dispersion of Lithuanians throughout the Soviet Union and the importation of Russian immigrants into Lithuania, the Soviets are putting into operation their plan for the extermination of the Lithuanian people and for the colonization of Lithuania by alien populations. The number of Russians imported into Lithuania now totals 400,000.

6) The Lithuanian people have been deprived of their most elementary rights and liberties. The educational system, the press, and the administration is under the absolute control of the Communists. The Lithuanian people are obliged to participate under duress in various Soviet "elections."

And such an appalling state of affairs is found not in an enemy country, but in neutral Lithuania. Though it had suffered so many grievous wrongs at the hands of the Soviets in the course of their first occupation—the direct outcome of Soviet Russia's agreement with Nazi Germany, the Lithuanian people resisted, with utmost vigor and no mean measure of success, the Nazi efforts to draw it into the War and to mobilize its youth for war against the Soviet Union. The Lithuanian people put all its trust in the promise of a better world held out in the Atlantic Charter, which had been signed by the Western Democracies, and the Soviet Union as well, and which expressly guaranteed the right of all nations to independence. But of what consequence is the disavowal of a signature to a state which has calmly violated twenty-eight international treaties—treaties concluded with such countries as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and others?

uania of 1940-1941 and I have arrived, on the basis of personal experience, at the conclusion that the system of terror and oppression instituted by the Soviets, has far surpassed any terror exercised by the Tsarist regime of the worst atrocities perpetrated by Nazi Germany. During the present occupation, Soviet terrorism has not fallen off in the slightest degree, but has, on the contrary, increased and has attained such a degree of intensity, that the Lithuanian people is confronted with a very real threat of total extinction.

I am far advanced in age. In the course of my long life, I wrote and fought for my country's freedom and independence, for democracy. I have seen the inside of Tsarist prisons, and I have been sentenced to banishment by the Nazis. And today, when a most deadly peril overhangs my people, I venture to appeal to Your Excellency, for Your Excellency's personal intercession, as well as that of Your Excellency's Government and people, in behalf of the Lithuanian Republic in its hour of greatest need.

I take the liberty of requesting the mediation of Your Excellency's Government in bringing up the question of Lithuania in the international forum, with a view to:

1) Securing the withdrawal of Soviet occupation forces from Lithuanian territory;

2) Dispatching a special international commission of the United Nations to determine the extent of the damage inflicted on Lithuania by the invader and to investigate the crimes committed by him against international law and humanity;

3) Securing the release, from Soviet prisons, concentration camps, and other places of banishment, of all Lithuanian citizens;

4) Securing the return of all forcibly displaced Lithuanians from Germany and other countries to Lithuania.

I most earnestly appeal to Your Excellency for the signal favor of your help in putting a stop to the wanton extermination of the Lithuanian people.

I have the honour to beg Your Excellency to accept the expression of my highest consideration.

DR. KAZYS GRINIUS

Former President of the Republic of Lithuania.

7 YEARS OF OCCUPATION . . .



JUNE 15, 1940
GRANT, LORD, ETERNAL REST TO
THE SLAIN
SOLACE TO THE GRIEVING
AND LIBERTY TO THE OPPRESSED

A LETTER OF THANKS FROM GERMANY

Very Dear Sir

A few days ago we received a CARE package sent through your kindness. Please accept my profoundest gratitude for that precious gift. My gratitude is even deeper when realizing that it was sent by a totally strange person and by one who is concerned with the bitter fate that befell his fellow nationals and who appreciates the sorrow they are subjected to. I'm thrilled with your gift. Please accept this thanks from my family and me.

Permit me to take this opportunity to introduce myself briefly.

I am a native of Višakio-Rūda in the Marijampolė Department. I hold a diploma (certificate) as an engineer of forestry. Upon graduation from the university I was a forester in the green woodlands of Lithuania and soon after I was employed with wood exportation firms in Klaipėda and Kaunas which enabled me to travel extensively through various European countries. During the last four years I worked at the Agricultural Academy of Vilnius as an assistant professor and dean on the forestry faculty.

The desire to stay alive forced me to flee my native land from the hands of the Red Army and I landed in that section of Germany now occupied by the Americans. Life here is not easy. What the future holds for us is unknown, but we are continually trusting in Divine Providence. The arrival of your gift package seemed a gift from God alone.

Our family is composed of my wife, mother-in-law three sons and one daughter, ranging from 6 to 12 years of age.

We are greatly interested in knowing something about the kind person who so graciously sent us the food gift. We are saving it for Easter, and having you in our hearts with gratitude we will celebrate the sacred holiday.

Sincerely,

Antanas Vasiliauskas,
Germany.

(This CARE package was provided by Mrs. Jerome Evanson, from Jamestown, N.D.)

HELP LITHUANIAN REFUGEES IN EUROPE!

Victory on the battlefronts has not given all nations and all peoples the liberty to enjoy the Four Freedoms of the Atlantic Charter.

Today, in Western Europe, there are over 75,000 Lithuanians existing as displaced persons. In addition there are millions under restraint in enslaved Lithuania. Thousands more are exiled in Siberia. These people are living in despair and hunger.

UNRRA has been providing an existence for the displaced persons. Shortly, however, this aid will be withdrawn. It therefore becomes imperative to aid the displaced persons.

The United Lithuanian Relief Fund of America, Inc., has opened a Drive for contributions to aid these displaced Lithuanians, to alleviate their sufferings.

Your contribution would not only lessen the crucial suffering of these Lithuanians, but would also give them physical and spiritual strength and new hope for their existence.

Our People Are Pleading For The Right To Live!

United Lithuanian Relief Fund of America, Inc.,

Illinois State Committee,

840 W. 33rd Street, Chicago 8, Ill.

Telef.: Yards 4789.